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The Classroom Instruction System
Should Be Used for the Study of
of Political Theory

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This article stresses the importance of the classroom instruction system as a basic method of learning political theory and other cultural subjects, pointing out that the "small group discussion" system is only a supplementary way of learning. In some situations "self-review" and "self-study" is the basic method.

In the task of raising the level of political thinking among its cadres in its evening schools, the USSR is pushing forward a unified method of learning. All levels of schools in the USSR emphasize the classroom instruction system. This system can be used in China.

The discussion system is not suitable for China because many of the cadres have not received sufficient "thought" education and because of their own subjective limitations. The discussion method was used, in many places, to teach not only political subjects but also cultural subjects. These discussions were boring and the study of political theory made little progress.

The article contends that there are two types of classroom instruction system. One is the tutorial method of the feudal period which was appropriate for the then existing level of production and scientific development. After the industrial and commercial development of Europe in the 14th and 15th century and following the renaissance and the development of the natural sciences, the tutorial system was no longer practicable. As a result, the classroom instruction system together with the grading of school classes appeared. The USSR regards this development of education as one of mankind's greatest achievement, because it was able to spread a great deal of scientific knowledge and train a large group of people.

The classroom method naturally requires a strict system of organization and regulations. The number of students for each class must be determined; students of the same educational achievement must be grouped into one class; students cannot be absent at their own convenience and must complete their courses according to schedule. Unless these rules are enforced educational standards would be lowered. The USSR strictly regulate class attendance throughout their educational system. Except for sickness USSR students cannot be absent from classes. School attendance is like working in a factory where work and production cannot stop at the workers' convenience. For these reasons the USSR achieved great results in education ^{and} raised the level of political training among its students.

On the other hand, even though we ~~may~~ use the classroom system, we might have violated the very principle and requirements of this method and thereby achieved little results. For the sake of quick results, we have contravened the principle of orderliness and gradualness, neglecting to follow a systematic plan of organization. Many students with insufficient preparation were placed in higher elementary schools while many who had no elementary education were placed in middle schools. Many cadremen with little cultural education did not attend classes to raise their cultural level. In many cases students, regardless of their individual differences and achievements, were thrown together in one class. Many cadremen, despite their low cultural level, want to be placed in higher grades and feel they have lost face if placed in lower grades. This is a mistaken idea and harmful to them, even though their experience in revolutionary work makes the study of political theory relatively easy. It must be remembered that revolutionary experience does not represent one's personal political and cultural level. Among those who oppose a regulated system of education there are those who believe that "war is the greatest school," and, therefore, they underestimate the importance of formal education and adopt an obstinate attitude toward the class-grading system. While it is true that Lenin said workers and peasants acquired more education

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in 3 years of revolution than in 10 years of peace, this is not to be considered a denial or degradation of the purpose of education. To deny the special role of the classroom instruction system is to destroy the unity of education. This is a capitalist-class concept propounded by John Dewey who believed that "school is society" and that all the complex affairs of life should be incorporated in the classroom.

Feudalistic education, applying a doctrinaire theory, stuffed students with educational dogma and neglected practical knowledge. For the sake of utility, students were given scraps of practical knowledge. They opposed theory and wanted to satisfy the immediate and narrow needs of the working classes, as a consequence students did not receive a well-rounded scientific education.

The educational system in the USSR is scientific. The USSR system demands unified theoretical education that is based on and guided by reality and practice. According to the nature of each subject taught, they have adopted particular methods of practice and application suitable to each.

In the theoretical field, the USSR uses a seminar system. Under this system the instructor devotes the first half of the classroom period to lecturing and the remaining period to student discussion of the lecture or papers prepared by individual students. The USSR seminar system should replace the "small group discussion" system of learning political theory.

In the past the discussion system led to reliance on others, mental laziness. Many students wanted to elevate their theoretical knowledge through discussion without conscientious research and self-study. Participants in discussions were not prepared. During the discussions they would listen with a scornful attitude or a show of disinterest, and when they spoke they were not prepared to discuss the subject. This haphazard system does not provide ^{any} understanding of the problems discussed; it wastes time and causes duplication. Moreover the "small group discussion" method does not provide the students with teacher

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guidance; it develops a great number of controversial arguments that are not easy to solve and that lead to no conclusion. Under the seminar system, the teacher assumes the leadership and appoints various students to prepare and discuss specific subjects. Students prepare themselves with respect to the subject they discuss and the presentation of their subject. Under this system students develop the power of analysis and synthesis.